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Decentralised Urban Governance in Delhi Municipal Corporations: Expanded Numerical Presence of Women in Basic Leadership Bodies (2012-2017) Effecting Gender Policies

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Abstract

Decentralisation has appeared as a facilitating institutional framework that transfers authority and accountability to local government levels, allowing individuals to engage in legislative processes to address various community issues that impact them. As urban areas expand swiftly, municipal authorities have become significant participants in the framework of decentralised governance. Facilities like public restrooms, secure transport, illumination on streets, access to clean water, and effective sewage systems are not services that cater to all genders equally. Developments in infrastructure that seem advantageous to women will only yield positive results if gender-specific strategies are developed, funded, enacted, and evaluated appropriately. Requiring a noticeable number of women in decision making. According to Critical Mass Theory (Norris and Lovenduski, 2001) a minority group's statement causes a significant change in institutions political discussion and policies provided it reaches a particular number. The 74th Amendment of the Constitution establishes an equal chance for women to have a political voice.

This article examines women's expanded numerical presence, positions they occupy and the effect it has on the functioning of the three Municipal Corporations of Delhi on women's concerns through the interview method of women councillors, structured questionnaires and focused group discussions for the year 2012-2017. Decentralised urban governance is covered in Section 1. Section 2 shows the involvement of women representatives in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi's various entities as council members, committee members, and even leaders. The conclusion emphasises the effects women's presence could have on the agenda and policies discussed.

Keywords: *Decentralisation; Urban Governance; Delhi Municipal Corporations; Municipal Committee; Women Representation; Women Councillors*

Introduction

Decentralisation implies a process that involves a transfer of authority from central to local neighborhood legal entities allowing basic leadership offices to have an independent presence. It is getting ready for self-government. The most popular justification for decentralisation is its "people-focused" approach to resolving local conflicts ensuring social and economic justice (Kothari, 1999). The local civic institutions are "a school of political limit," supported by its efficient use of local resources, expertise, and knowledge as well as improved information flow (Jayal, 2006). Being schooled by local interests and neighborhood learning, such organisations would become increasingly productive for transformation and public

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engagement, rural development, public service performance, poverty alleviation, fiscal crisis relief, national unity, state construction, and government legitimacy (Larson, 2004).

It is an enabling structure meeting the requirements of people. By granting women seats in Urban Local Bodies, 74th Constitution Amendment Act created a section within the historical context of fair decentralisation. A third of seats in municipality were allotted to women, divided among the constituencies in a rotating manner. Additionally, on the percentage of towns or city's total population seats were reserved for SCs and STs. ULBs address issues that directly affect women's well-being, including safe and sufficient drinking water, improved medical care, schooling, livelihoods, slum betterment, residences, a safe environment, sanitation, and transportation. Their presence in substantial numbers thus becomes imperative during formulation of public policy.

Decentralised Urban Governance: An Overview

Decentralisation became necessary to increase participation and make democratic institutions accountable, efficient, and responsible (Rao, 2015). Early examples of urban governance were found in historical records. With emergence of cities after 3000 B.C., societies changed from tribal to state systems. Harappan civilization (2300–1750 B.C.) had sophisticated urban planning and elected councils (Smith, 2002). Assemblies are mentioned in Vedic scriptures, and councils governed Janapadas like the Lichhavis. Local administrations were organised throughout the Mauryan, Gupta, and Chola dynasties (Second Administrative Reforms Commission, 2007). The Kotwal had power under Mughal rule. Local institutions deteriorated during British administration (Shodhganga).

With the founding of Madras Corporation in 1687, British involvement signaled the beginning of a new era in local government. Although they lacked sufficient authority, resources, and autonomy, districts were established primarily to handle urban services like water supply and sanitation, collect taxes, and achieve political goals. Municipal bodies were given statutory status by the Charter Act of 1793. Although the true goal remained revenue mobilisation, urban administration gained traction following Samuel Laing's 1861–1862 budget speech and Lord Mayo's 1870 resolution endorsing elected local representatives and fiscal decentralisation (Shodhganga). Local self-government with elected non-official majorities was established with little autonomy by Ripon's Resolution of 1882 (Shodhganga). Districts be accorded more authority was recommended by Royal Commission on Decentralisation (1907). Voted municipal governments were reinforced by revisions under Montague-Chelmsford (1919), but after the Government of India Act, 1935, development slowed, indicating a piecemeal support for local governance (Shodhganga).

The Constituent Assembly (1946–1949) debated whether power be centralised or distributed to localities. Article 40 of the Directive Principles instructed states to set up village panchayats as autonomous units (Constituent Assembly Debates, 1948). The Panchayati Raj Act bolstered local governments in rural areas after independence, but the constitution made no mention of urban local bodies. Disregard was evident in the shifting of responsibilities for city management among different ministries (Shodhganga). A refocus resulted from increasing civic concerns and requirements made by organisations such as the All India Council of Mayors. In the mid-1980s National Commission on Urbanisation advised Article 40 be extended to cities (Ramanathan, 2012). Both the 65th and 63rd Constitutional Amendment Bill (1989) on municipalities, that called for creation of three different kinds of municipalities, removal of financial restrictions, and empowerment of urban local authorities, were defeated. In 1991, 74th Constitutional Amendment Bill was proposed, and Urban Local authorities was finally enacted into law in 1992. Ward committees, reservations for women, SCs, and STs, State Finance Commissions, CAG audits, and constitutional status for urban local governments were all included (Shodhganga). West Bengal established a State Finance Commission and was the first state to adopt it (74th Amendment Act, Municipal Affairs).

In the case of Delhi, the Municipal Committee election expanded the number of wards to 47 and added three more SC members, totalling 50 in 1951. The State Reorganisation Committee recommended Delhi to be under central control and remain a Union Territory governed under Article 239. The Delhi

Administration Act of 1966 established the Executive Council and Metropolitan Council. The Administrator and Executive Council held actual authority, while the Metropolitan Council had limited advising responsibilities. Central supervision was maintained over major concerns. Delhi's budget was a part of the National Finances, and the President had final say (Delhi Administration Act, 1966).

Significant changes were made to Delhi municipal government following 74th CAA, 1992. The Act changed the roles, duration, reserves, and organisational structure of municipalities and municipal corporations. The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 1993, which went into effect on October 1, 1993, revised the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 to conform to these constitutional obligations (Delhi State Election Commission, Introduction).

Table 1: DMC wards and seats reservation; Total- 272 Municipal Councillors: 2012-17

Trifurcated MCD- North, South, East with 50% of seats reserved for women			
2012-17			
Gender	**North**	**South**	**East**
Male	42	44	26
Female	42	45	27
Female (SC)	10	8	6
Male (SC)	10	7	5
Total	**104**	**104**	**64**

Source: Delhi State Election Commission: Delhi. Accessed 13 October 2016.

In 1993, the number of directly elected council members rose from 80 to 100 and finally to 134. Wards were expanded to 272 based on the 2001 census, and delimitation was announced on February 7, 2007. The North, South, and East corporations comprised twelve zones that made up the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. As shown in Table 1, East Delhi has 64 wards whereas North and South Delhi each have 104 wards, with seats reserved for SCs and women. SCs make up almost 17 percent of Delhi's population, according to the 2011 census. As a result, 46 wards are set aside for SCs (24 for SC women, 22 for SC men), and a rotation method guarantees that 50 percent of seats are set up for women (Delhi State Election Commission, Introduction).

Expanded Numerical Strength of Women Representatives in Delhi Municipal Corporation Membership in Committees of MCD

Increase of women representation from 33 percent in 1993 to 50 percent in 2012 shows a notable rise in their proportion in political decision making. MCD is run by a number of councillors, ward committees, and advisory bodies. Councillors are elected representatives nearest to the people. They participate in developmental decision making through deliberative, policy, administrative, or management measures, best articulated at local ward level. The level of engagement at the deliberative level is gauged by their membership in decision-making organisations (DMC Act, 1957).

The deliberative arm of MCD consists of statutory committee along with special and ad hoc committees as it deems necessary to fulfill its duties. All committees are constituted annually, allowing councillors to participate in municipal activities and decisions; however, no committees provide any reservation of membership for women (Raheja, 1972).

Table 2: Membership of women councilors (general & SC) in the committees of the Corporation in Divided MCD - North/South/East

S. No.	Committees	North Delhi Municipal Corporations					East Delhi Municipal Corporations					South Delhi Municipal Corporations				
		2012-2017					2012-2017					2012-2017				
		Total No. of Members*	Woman Members**		Percentage***		Total No. of Members	Woman Members		Percentage		Total No. of Members	Woman Members		Percentage	
			W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)		W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)		W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)
1	Standing Committee	60	19	3	31.66%	5.00 %	40	27	0	67.50 %	0.00 %	50	12	0	24.00 %	0.00 %
2	Education Committee	35	17	0	48.57%	0.00 %	35	25	0	74.10 %	0.00 %	35	18	2	51.42 %	5.71 %
3	Rural Area Committee (2014 onwards to 16)	110	33	4	30.00%	3.63 %	15	12	0	80.00 %	0.00 %	110	60	12	57.41 %	11.42%
4	Assurances	50	27	5	54.00%	10.00%	40	26	7	65.00 %	17.50%	50	28	3	56.00 %	6.00 %
5	Appointment Promotions, Disciplinary & Allied Matters	105	54	4	51.42%	3.80 %	70	49	11	70.00 %	15.71%	105	40	6	38.09 %	5.71 %
6	Works	105	55	7	52.38%	6.66 %	70	48	3	54.28 %	4.28 %	105	59	14	56.19 %	13.35%
7	Medical Relief & Public Health	105	51	17	48.57%	16.19%	70	48	9	68.57 %	12.85%	105	59	9	56.19 %	8.57 %
8	Environmental Management Services	105	64	18	60.95%	17.14%	70	45	10	64.28 %	14.28%	105	72	7	68.57 %	6.66 %
9	Garden	105	77	16	73.33%	15.23%	70	53	7	75.71 %	10.00%	105	93	19	88.57 %	18.01%

10	**Law & General Purposes**	105	71	16	67.61%	15.23%	70	51	9	72.85%	12.85%	105	70	10	66.66%	9.52%
11	**Hindi**	80	59	13	73.75%	16.25%	55	37	11	76.36%	20.00%	80	39	13	91.26%	16.25%
12	**High Powered Property Taxes**	80	44	5	55.00%	6.25%	55	20	2	67.27%	3.63%	80	29	6	48.75%	7.50%
13	**Municipal Accounts**	50	37	11	74.00%	22.00%	40	18	3	50.00%	7.50%	50	29	1	58.00%	2.00%
14	**Code of Conduct for Councillors**	50	27	13	54.00%	26.00%	40	26	5	45.00%	12.50%	50	36	3	58.00%	6.00%
15	**Sports**	80	36	8	45.00%	10.00%	55	26	2	46.42%	3.63%	80	30	5	45.00%	6.25%
16	**Remunerative Projects**	75	27	2	35.00%	2.66%	55	35	1	63.68%	1.81%	75	30	1	40.00%	1.33%
17	**Licensing &Tehbazari**	105	59	10	56.19%	9.52%	70	53	13	75.71%	18.57%	105	81	12	77.14%	11.42%
18	**Community Services**	105	88	11	83.80%	10.47%	70	53	9	75.71%	12.85%	105	51	6	48.57%	5.71%
19	**Welfare of SCs & Implementation of SC Candidate Quota**	90	61	56	67.77%	62.22%	40	24	21	60.00%	52.50%	50	40	36	80.00%	72.00%
20	**Anti-Malaria Measures**	75	53	15	70.66%	20.00%	55	37	6	67.27%	10.90%	75	41	21	54.66%	28.00%
21	**Anti-Flood Measures**	75	41	6	54.66%	8.00%	55	26	7	52.72%	12.72%	75	34	1	45.33%	1.33%

22	**Naming & Renaming of Streets, etc.**	50	21	4	42.00%	8.00%	40	20	2	50.00%	5.00%	50	27	1	54.00%	2.00%
23	**Gants-in-Aid**	75	24	1	32.00%	1.33%	55	27	3	49.09%	5.45%	50	10	1	20.00%	2.00%
24	**National Festivals, Fares& Allied Matters**	75	37	2	49.33%	2.66%	55	43	8	78.18%	14.54%	75	55	11	73.33%	14.66%
25	**MahilaKalyan& Bal Vikas**	105	126	13	100.00%	12.38%	55	66	8	100.00%	14.54%	105	126	5	100.00%	4.76%
26	**Grievances Redressal**	50	24	2	48.00%	4.00%	55	28	2	50.90%	3.63%	50	32	10	64.00%	20.00%

Source: Information collected from personal interviews with the women councillors and minutes of the monthly house meetings of the three Corporations (North, South and East).

* Total number of members for 5 years: 2012-17.

** Total W (G) and W (SC) in the different committees for 5 years: 2012-17.

*** The percentage of W (G) and W (SC) in the different committees for 5 years: 2012-17.

Table 2 shows women councillors membership in the various committees of NDMC, EDMC and SDMC for the year 2012-2017. Figures for NDMC in Table 2 reveals that 100 percent of women (General) are members of Women Welfare and Bal Kalyan committees, 84 percent of Community Services committees, and roughly 70 percent of Garden, Hindi, and Anti-Malaria committees. Committees pertaining to finance are similarly well-represented: 55 percent in High Powered Property Taxes, 68 percent in Law and General Purposes, and 74 percent in Municipal Accounts. With the exception of Standing and Grants-in-Aid, all other committees surpass 33 percent, and the majority such as Assurances committee; Appointments', Promotions, Disciplinary and Allied Matters; Works committee; Code of Conduct for Councillors; Licensing and Tehbazari; Anti-Flood measures surpass 50 percent.

On the other hand, Ten women (SC) delegates make up the NDMC. Their largest membership (62 percent) in the SC Welfare and Quota Implementation Committee is displayed in Table 2. They are represented in the following areas: Hindi, Medical Relief and Public Works (16 percent), Code of Conduct (26 percent), Anti-Malaria (20 percent), Environmental Management (17 percent), Garden and Law and General Purposes (15 percent), and Municipal Accounts (22 percent). The membership of all committees, with the exception of a few mentioned committees, varies from three to ten percent.

The figures from EDMC show membership of Mahila and Bal Vikas as 100 percent female (General) and 80 percent (Rural Area). Committees that are typically thought to be dominated by men also exhibit substantial participation rates: Standing committee (68 percent), Law and General Purposes (73 percent), High Powered Property Taxes (67 percent), Remunerative Projects (64 percent), and Municipal

Accounts (50 percent). Many committees, such as the Education committee, Appointments, Promotions, Disciplinary and Allied Matters, Garden, Hindi, Licensing and Tehbazari, Community Services, National Festivals, Fares and Allied Matters have more than 70 percent female participation, while committees for Sports, Grants-in-Aid, and the Code of Conduct have more than 40 percent. Likewise, EDMC has six female (SC) representatives. Their membership is 20 percent in Hindi, 19 percent Licensing and Tehbazari, 18 percent Assurances, 16 percent Appointments and Allied Matters, 15 percent National Festivals and Mahila Kalyan, 14 percent Environmental Services, 13 percent in several committees, like Community Services, Anti-Flood Measures, Medical Relief and Public Health and Law and General Purposes, 8 percent Municipal Accounts, and 4 percent Property Taxes, Grievances, and Sports.

Membership of women councillors in the committees of SDMC from table 2 exhibits outstanding performance. Mahila and Bal Vikas committee shows 100 percent women (general) membership, Hindi 91 percent, Garden 89 percent, and SC Welfare 80 percent. Licensing and Tehbazari has 77 percent, National Festivals 73 percent. Hard committees also show high participation: Law and General Purposes 67 percent, Municipal Accounts 58 percent, Property Taxes 49 percent, Sports 45 percent. Statutory committees include Standing Committee 24 percent, Education Committee 51 percent, and Rural Area Committee 57 Percent. Women (SC) make up the largest percentage of SC Welfare members in the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (72 percent). Anti-Malaria (28 percent), Grievances Redressal (20 percent), Garden (18 percent), Hindi (16 percent), National Festivals (15 percent), Works (13 percent), Licensing and Tehbazari, and Rural Area Committee (11 percent) are among the other committees. Ten percent go toward Law and General Purposes, eight percent go toward Property Taxes, and six percent membership reflects many committees such as the Education Committee, Assurances, Appointments, Promotions and Allied Matters,

Environmental Management Services, Code of Conduct for Councillors, Sports Promotion and Community Services.

Table 3: Women Councillors-Mayor and Deputy Mayor: 2012-17 (trifurcated MCD)

Zones	North		South		East	
	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)
Mayor	1	0	2	0	2	1
Total	5	5	5	5	5	5
Percentage	20	0	40	0	40	20
Deputy Mayor	2	1	1	0	2	0
Total	5	5	5	5	5	5
Percentage	40	20	20	0	40	0

Source: Information collected from personal interviews with the women councillors and data collected from the minutes of the monthly house meetings of the three Corporations (North, South and East).

The Mayor leads the Corporation with the help of a Deputy Mayor with one-year tenure. The position is reserved for women (General) in the first year and SCs in the third, encouraging female councillors to contest elections. Table 3 demonstrates that between 2012 and 2017, just one woman councillor from the Scheduled Castes category held the roles of Mayor and Deputy Mayor, compared to five women from the General category.

Table 4: Women Councillors: Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson in MCD 2012-17

Table 4.1	NDMC 2012-17										
Year	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		Total
Category	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	
Chairpersons	14	2	12	3	10	1	15	2	10	3	72
Total	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	320
Percentage	43.75	6.25	37.5	9.37	31.25	3.12	46.87	6.25	31.25	9.37	225
Deputy chairpersons	15	3	21	4	19	1	15	1	22	6	107
Total	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	320
Percentage	46.88	9.375	65.6	12.5	59.38	3.125	46.88	3.125	68.75	18.8	33.44

Table 4.2	SDMC 2012-17										
Year	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		Total
Category	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	
Chairpersons	12	1	12	1	11	1	12	0	11	2	63
Total	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	300
Percentage	40	3.33	40	3.33	36.66	3.33	40	0	36.66	6.66	210
Deputy chairpersons	14	2	16	3	19	4	18	1	24	2	103
Total	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	300
Percentage	46.67	6.667	53.33	10	63.33	13.33	60	3.33	80	6.667	34.33

Table 4.3	EDMC 2012-17										
Year	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		Total
Category	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	W (G)	W (SC)	
Chairpersons	10	3	10	0	13	7	12	0	13	0	68
Total	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	280
Percentage	35.7	10.7	35.7	0	46.4	25	42.8	0	46.4	0	348
Deputy chairpersons	11	4	16	2	17	1	17	3	14	0	85
Total	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	280
Percentage	39.3	14.3	57.1	7.14	60.7	3.57	60.7	10.7	50	0	30.4

Source: information collected from the personal interview with the women councillors and data collected from the minutes of the monthly house meetings of the three Corporations (North, South and East).

Table 4 lists the female councillors holding positions of chairpersons and deputy chairpersons. 61 and 92 General-category women held positions as chairpersons and deputy chairperson in the NDMC (2012–2017), while 11 and 15 women (SC) occupied the positions of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson in the North DMC (Table 4.1).

Similarly, 58 and 98 women from the General category were chosen to serve as Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation. Twelve women (SC) held the position of

Deputy Chairperson and five held the position of Chairperson in Corporation and Zonal committees (Table 4.2). Within EDMC, 58 women from general category were elected as chairperson and 75 as deputy chairperson. Ten women (SC) each served as chairperson and deputy chairperson, according to (Table 4.3).

The 74th Amendment to the Constitution secured a place for women in various decision-making institutions. Nonetheless, just having women present does not adequately address and enhance issues relevant to them. Women representatives actively engage in the development responsibilities of their community, working to guarantee access to essential services and other issues that impact women's welfare.

DMC: The Role of Women Councillors in Enhancing Welfare and Development in Their Wards

A Councillor's role in development guarantees essential services, influenced by the view of issues within the ward and the requests of the community. Table 5 and Table 6 shows the perception held by women councillors about the problems faced by women in their respective wards and welfare and development plan implemented by them.

Table 5 : Types of problems faced by women as perceived by women councillors : 2012-17

Sl.No.	Types of Problems	Women (General)	Percentage	Women (SC)	Percentage
1	Scarcity of water	16	19.75	6	35.29
2	Welfare of Muslim women	7	8.64	1	5.88
3	Unemployment	36	44.44	5	29.41
4	Lack of security and safety	16	19.75	3	17.64
5	Health related problems	7	8.64	4	23.52
6	Children admission in school	10	12.34	2	11.76
7	Poverty	32	39.5	6	35.29
8	Sanitation	37	45.67	12	70.58
9	Domestic problems	28	34.56	7	41.17
10	Lack of awareness of rights	10	12.34	4	23.52
11	Pension	4	4.93	4	23.52

Source: information collected from the personal interview with the women councillors of the Corporation.

Table 5 displays the views of women (General) and women (SC) regarding issues within the ward. Among women (General), 46 percent mentioned sanitation and 44 percent highlighted unemployment. Additional worries included poverty (40 percent), domestic challenges (36 percent), along with water scarcity, inadequate security, and low awareness of women's rights (20 percent each), respectively.

Among women (SC), 71 percent recognised sanitation as a significant issue in their area. Issues at home like conflicts in marriage and domestic violence were also prominent worries. Furthermore, 35 percent mentioned lack of water and financial hardship. Other challenges, noted by 24 percent, involved health concerns, pension issues, and insufficient knowledge regarding women's rights in their communities. The inquiry concerning the welfare and advancement initiatives started and carried out by female Councillors in their individual Wards saw most of the Women Councillors responding positively.

Table 6: Welfare and development plan implemented by women councillors in their wards : 2012-17

Sl.No.	Schemes implemented	Women (General)	Percentage	Women (SC)	Percentage
1	Pension for widows/old aged	35	43.2	9	52.94
2	Distribution of sewing machine to BPL and women	20	24.69	11	64.7
3	Distribution of wheel chair to handicapped	3	3.7	11	64.7
4	Grant of 30,000 for marriage of widow's daughter	13	16.04	6	35.29
5	Mahila Park	7	8.64	2	11.76
6	Mahila Gym	2	2.46	2	11.76
7	Sanitation	9	11.11	10	58.82
8	Opening of selai-centres providing training for self-employment	14	17.28	5	29.41
9	Safe drinking water	2	2.46	6	35.29
10	Health camps	14	17.28	5	29.41
11	Women safety/self-defense training	2	2.46	2	11.76
12	Ration card/ Aadhar card	4	4.93	7	41.17
13	Distribution of ironing press for dhobis	1	1.23	7	41.17
14	Street lights installed	2	2.46	3	17.64

Source: information collected from the personal interview with women councillors in the Corporation.

The data presented in Table 6 reveals that female councillors from both General and SC groups executed welfare and development initiatives that were advantageous to women in their respective wards. Among the female councillors in the General category, 43 percent emphasised distribution of pensions for widows and senior citizens, 25 percent concentrated on offering sewing machines to disadvantaged women, 16 percent assisted widows by providing ₹30,000 in marriage support for their daughters, and 17 percent set up sewing centers and offered vocational training in computer skills and beauty courses. Also prioritised sanitation issues, constructed women's parks, and helped in providing ration and Aadhaar cards to facilitate access to welfare programs.

Statistics regarding the implementation of welfare programs by female councillors (SC) indicate diverse areas of focus. Roughly 65 percent prioritised giving sewing machines to impoverished women and wheelchairs for individuals with disabilities, while 59 percent concentrated on enhancing sanitation facilities. Distribution of pensions to widows was a key focus for 52 percent of councillors. Approximately 41 percent assisted dhobis by giving them ironing presses and facilitated issuance of ration and Aadhaar cards. Close to 35 percent allocated ₹30,000 in marriage assistance to widows for daughter's marriage and ensured access to safe drinking water. Around 30 percent established sewing and coaching centers, provided computer education, and organised health camps. Moreover, 18 percent were involved in the installation of street lights to enhance safety for women, whereas 12 percent were active in advocating for mahila parks, gyms, and training in self-defense.

Conclusion

The advancement of sustainable city development necessitates participatory governance that includes increased involvement of women and underrepresented communities. The results align with the critical mass theory, demonstrating that quotas have facilitated not only women's involvement but also their proactive engagement, altering local government priorities. Female council members advocate for initiatives that consider gender, tackle issues affecting women with understanding, and help resolve family conflicts. Municipal initiatives are progressively more advantageous for women and girls, signifying that women in decision-making capacities have improved welfare and growth of women within the community sphere.

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